DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 269 024 IR 051 501

AUTHOR Miller, Rosalind; Russell, Ralph
TITLE Implications of High School Student Use of Academic Libraries.
PUB DATE Oct 85
NOTE 16p.; Paper presented at the Annual Conference of the Georgia Library Association (Augusta, GA, October 23-27, 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Libraries; Higher Education; *High School Students; *Information Needs; Library Research; *Library Services; Position Papers; Questionnaires; *School Libraries; Surveys
IDENTIFIERS *Georgia

ABSTRACT

Academic librarians report that use by increasingly large numbers of high school students is creating pressures in budgets, staff, and materials. Indications are that these demands will increase: students are increasingly sophisticated in their information needs; they are mobile; and school library media centers' collections have been weakened by diminishing funds, increased price of materials, and increased censorship. At the same time, the ability to search library catalogs and databases such as DIALOG from remote locations via terminals increases awareness of resources. High school students can readily obtain lists of relevant sources, but these sources are usually found in the academic library. This research study was designed to answer two questions: How do academic library directors perceive library use by high school students? and Why do high school students come to academic libraries, when do they come, and what do they do when they get there? Questionnaires were mailed to 32 Georgia academic library administrators and distributed to 385 high school students using these institutions during a 2-week period. Administrators reported that service to these students was seen as part of the university recruiting efforts, and identified unreturned materials and undefined reference resource needs as the two most serious problems. Students indicated they used the university library instead of the school library because the collection was superior, the library was more convenient, and they preferred the service offered. (Author/THC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OERI
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official position or policy.

IMPLICATIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT USE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

ED269024

ABSTRACT

Academic librarians report that use by increasingly large numbers of high school students is creating pressures in budgets, staff and materials. Questionnaires were used to survey those academic librarians reporting extensive or heavy use, and the students who were using those libraries. This study reports the findings of the surveys and discusses the implications for both academic libraries and school districts wanting to improve school library media services.

IR051501

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Rosalind Miller
Ralph Russell
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

IMPLICATIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT USE OF ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Finding themselves under pressure to provide services for local high school students, academic librarians (in this paper junior college, college, and university librarians) often react immediately with impatience and an impulse to deny the request. However, in this period of active college recruitment programs and sagging library budgets, such response may be inappropriate.

Indications are that demands from the high school population will increase: (1) high school students are increasingly sophisticated in their information needs; (2) they are mobile; and, (3) school library media centers' print resource collections have been weakened by diminishing federal funds for high school collections, increased price of materials, growing emphasis on audiovisual materials, and increased censorship. At the same time, the ability to search academic library catalogs and databases such as DIALOG at remote locations via computer terminals increases awareness of resources. And while high school students can readily obtain lists of relevant sources, these sources are usually found in the academic, not the high school library.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR THE STUDY

Academic librarians seeking guidance from the literature

will find a dearth of research and scant exposition on this topic. It is the purpose of this paper to gather baseline data on information needs and academic library use by high school students.

In planning this study the authors were seeking two specific types of information:

1) How do academic library directors perceive library use by high school students?

2) Why do high school students come to academic libraries, when do they come, and what do they do when they get there?

By using a survey research strategy and a questionnaire developed for these purposes, such information was obtained.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Few studies of this topic exist. In a study of student library resource requirements in Philadelphia (Benford), the research tracked the library use habits of elementary and secondary school students in the public, parochial, and private schools. The data collected showed clearly that the supply of library resources did not match the demand. Secondly, the students' difficulty in obtaining assigned and desired information was impairing their educational progress.

A portion of a statewide survey in Colorado was devoted

to the information needs of high school students. In this study (Colorado State Library), 7% of the high school students surveyed used an academic library at least once per year. The most frequently mentioned improvement the high school students wished for in their school media centers concerned the staff. The students characterized the school library staff as less-than-helpful, or restrictive.

In a paper presented at a state library conference (Miller, Russell), alternative service levels offered to high school users of academic libraries were described with potential consequences noted. Some of the data used were gleaned from a telephone poll. A conclusion from that paper is the desirability of a written policy statement, disseminated to all concerned.

PROCEDURE

The instruments used in this present study were closed form and open-ended, non-standardized questionnaires constructed by the investigators. The questionnaire administered to the library administrators consisted of nine items with multiple choice answers and an open-ended question. The students' questionnaire also consisted of nine items, seven with multiple

choice answers.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Library Administrator Survey

The questionnaire was sent to 32 academic library administrators. The response rate was 29 out of 32 institutions or 90.6% response. All respondents reported some academic library use by high school students: ten reported heavy use and seven reported extensive use.

The following answers were from those 17 librarians:

What are the problems which you observed in serving these students?

16 Drain on staff resources
14 Undefined resource needs
13 Noise level in library
10 Crowded access to materials
8 Unreturned/overdue materials
4 Overload at photocopy machine
4 Crowded access to seating in library

Do you provide high school students with:

16 Reference services
11 Bibliographic instruction
9 Checkout privileges
4 Other services (fee-based, including searching)
3 Interlibrary loans

What materials do high school students use more heavily?

17 Journals
13 Reference books
12 Monograph collection
9 Microform
1 Audio/visuals

The time of day during which heaviest use occurs is usually:

10 Seven to ten p.m.
7 Three to five p.m.
4 Five to seven p.m.

Please describe the interaction between principals, students, counselors, and librarians in the high school and your library:

	Initiated by you	Initiated by school
Workshops	0	1
Telephone	6	10
Letters	9	6
Visits	10	12
Tours	3	13
Assignments	0	1

The most serious problems according to the academic librarians were vague assignments, drain on the staff, and unreturned materials. Comments included:

"We seldom have any warning from the schools - they come in droves at certain times"

"These students have had no bibliographic instruction and cannot read citations. The problem comes when the librarian has to explain to each one how to use an index"

"Teachers do not advise the students about our established policies for high school borrowers"

"Teachers should assume more responsibilities in impressing upon students the need to return books on time. It is not uncommon for months to elapse before materials are returned"

"Most serious problem is faculty assigning work but don't explain what is needed and will not bring their classes for instruction"

"High school students do not know how to conduct themselves in a college library setting"

"The most problems are caused by the high school faculty that don't seem to know 'their ear from a hole in the ground' about good library usage. We work closely with other libraries but school teachers often bypass high school libraries in making assignments"

Why then do academic librarians open their doors to the high school students?

"The academic dean has told us that high school use of the library is his big recruitment tool, so we try to close our eyes to a lot"

"We feel that this is a very important service in that it serves as a recruiting tool. In an age of declining enrollments we would be foolish to bypass this valuable opportunity to recruit"

"We feel like it is our contribution to the overall college recruitment effort"

"We have to be more tolerant of high school students since President's desire is to serve community most"

The 12 libraries that perceived high school student use as moderate or light had understandably more benevolent views. They also identified unreturned materials and undefined reference resource needs as the two most serious problems, but commented as follows:

"Promotes a spirit of cooperation between college and community"

"We have solved the problems of unreturned materials. We now require the teachers to check out all the materials and hold them responsible for their return"

"As a class of borrowers, high school students are neither worse nor better than any other group of people we serve"

"We welcome and are pleased to have high school students, however, we need more interaction with teachers"

"Use by high school students is seen as a public relations/recruiting tool"

"Library services offered are considered to be yet another way to attract these students to ultimately enroll. Overall their teachers tend to encourage them not to abuse library privileges, so their behavior is quite good"

In this age of sagging enrollments the library's resources and services are frequently cited in the recruiting efforts of the institution; certainly a reputation for insensitivity to local high school students information needs would be negative public relations. Those librarians who perceived the influx of students as heavy or extensive had the most complaints about their behavior but seemed to have developed a policy of "gritting the teeth and doing their duty." Institutions that reported moderate or light usage were also aware of the public relations aspect, but also had a more positive attitude toward the students. All told,

thirteen of the libraries, or 45%, offered checkout privileges and all reported offering reference services. Nineteen attempted to supply bibliographic instruction as needed. All groups complained of the students' undefined information needs and, even though all reported a fair amount of interaction initiated by the schools, all complained about high school librarians and/or teachers.

High School Student Survey

The second population surveyed were the 385 students using the libraries in a 2 week period in those institutions reporting extensive or heavy use:

Frequency of academic library use during the school year:

213 One to five times
100 Six to ten times
72 More than ten times

Time of use:

147 Three to five p.m.
145 Weekends
102 Five to seven p.m.
80 After seven p.m.

Service needs:

319 Use reference books
196 Use journals
170 Needed assistance in using reference sources
147 Checked out books
49 Obtained materials through interlibrary loan
37 Used online searching services
26 Used audiovisuals
25 Participated in some sort of formal bibliographic

instruction

Reasons for use:

304 Used library because the collection was superior to what was available in the high school
232 Found the hours more convenient
225 Preferred the services they received
199 First used the library on suggestion of a teacher
194 Heard from other students
59 Suggestion for use came from school librarian
51 Suggestion for use came from parents

107 of them actually used more than one academic library.

Grade level was as follows:

7th grade	3
8th grade	3
9th grade	30
10th grade	50
11th grade	148
12th grade	155

The majority of the students were in the library to do research for English classes with social studies a runner-up. Only twenty-eight students reported working on scientific subjects. American and English authors were the most popular topics, followed by current-event type subjects such as Central America, child abuse, or hostages.

The majority of students, either on the advice of their teachers or fellow-students, use academic libraries for term paper research. Most came from 3 to 5 p.m. on weekdays or on weekends. Eighty percent came to use reference books and fifty

percent used journals. About half needed bibliographic assistance. Three/fifths checked out books (from the nine out of seventeen institutions that permitted it). About 15 percent used interlibrary loan services and less than 10 percent used online searching, audiovisuals, or experienced some kind of formal bibliographic instruction. Almost three/fifths came five times or less during the year. About one/fifth came more than ten times.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

Most problems in academic library use by high school students arise where the use is the heaviest. These institutions should then consider alternatives and perhaps become more proactive than reactive. Many students come to the library to complete assigned papers and most come at the behest of their teachers. The librarians complained about a lack of communication with the school and the teachers. Yet they indicated that most interaction was initiated by the schools. Letters to the schools (especially concerning the overdue books problem) were the most favored method of communication by the librarians, whereas the schools' favorite request was for tours. Neither is likely to improve student use of libraries. Both librarians and teachers seem to be ignoring the school media specialist in this whole process. Students

admit that they need bibliographic assistance; the academic librarians provide this mainly on a one-to-one basis. Working through the high school media specialist to provide bibliographic assistance in the high school before students come to the library would seem an effective way. Seminars conducted during term paper time by the academic librarians in the local high schools, as well as Saturday seminars in the library, could be tried.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SCHOOLS

Implications for high schools seem more critical than for academic libraries. Apparently many students are not receiving adequate instruction in use of reference tools, nor do they perceive the school media center as adequate for their reference needs. Indeed their teachers seem to share this perception, often recommending that students use the local academic library. Many of today's high schools have abolished study halls when possible, leaving students little time except after school and weekends to do their research--exactly when the school library is closed. School media centers that wish to provide for the research needs of their students must 1) evaluate their reference books and periodicals, 2) encourage teachers and media specialists to work together to define students' research needs and to provide bibliographic instruction, 3) schedule entire classes to come

to the school library during class time, and 4) consider extending hours.

Both schools and colleges-universities will have to realize that it will become more difficult for academic libraries to offer the current level of assistance to a burgeoning number of students while academic libraries and school media centers remain aloof from one another. Cooperative workshops, planning sessions, and cooperative selection policies would, in the long-term, do much for both institutions. Even the most public-minded college or university administrator may have to acknowledge that, without additional staff or funding, some limits will have to be set on high school use of academic libraries. As for the high schools, as one academic librarian rather plaintively stated:

> "Exactly what does it mean when high school students use our library? Are their needs not being met by their high school library? If not, why not? If the public and high school librarians are not aware of their needs they should be so advised. If these librarians are cognizant of these needs, should they be allowed to ignore this segment of their borrowing community? This is an issue that should be addressed and reconciled."

Indeed there are a number of implications connected with this issue which need to be explored.

1. Has an emphasis on the acquisitions of audiovisual materials in school media centers diluted the print collection?

2. Are appropriate officials included in discussions of this issue, i.e. school superintendents, principals, media coordinators, academic and library administrators?

3. Should there be closer examination of the role of the media specialist in the high school?

4. Is resource sharing possible between school districts and academic libraries, with school districts contributing their unique audiovisual resources and the colleges, the back-up print collection?

5. Because of the common purpose and goals of both secondary schools and colleges, should some type of merger of the library services of these institutions be investigated?

If the high school user of the academic library is now an element which must be acknowledged in planning academic library services and collections, there should be active involvement of all concerned--librarians, administrators, teachers, and students--in the planning of those services and collections. It is widely acknowledged that libraries are in a period of change, some even predicting the disappearance of libraries as we know them. Perhaps we should become less rigid in our concepts of who uses what library and when, and in some instances, merge our services as needed.

REFERENCES

Benford, John Q. (1971). Student library resource requirements in Philadelphia. Supplementary Report. Washington, D.C.: Office of Education (DHEW), Bureau of Research. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 031 610)

Colorado State Library. (1974). A Survey of the attitudes, opinions and behavior of citizens of Colorado with regard to library services. Secondary school and college student summary, Vol. 2. Denver, CO: Colorado Market Research Services, Inc., Colorado State Library. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 093 270)

Miller, Rosalind E., & Russell, Ralph E. (1982). Academic library/High school interface. Paper presented at the College and University Division and Georgia chapter, ACRL Program Meeting, Georgia Library Association.